

(As prepared.)

Thank you, President Ford, for the kind introduction. Ford Bell is doing great work at the American Association of Museums.

This is not a partisan issue. I am a Democrat, but it was my Republican Mom who took me to the library. She is the one who taught me to ride the bus from South St. Paul to the science museum. For a child whose family had financial challenges, museums and libraries provided education opportunities to me.

It is an honor to be with you this morning - to thank you for the work you are doing.

Museums connect citizens to increasingly diverse world and help to preserve a community's culture and history. As a member of Congress, I am so proud to represent my home state of Minnesota - a state that has such a rich tradition of valuing, sustaining, and investing in museums, the arts, science, and citizen engagement with institutions that promote knowledge and learning.

The Twin Cities have an extraordinary abundance of excellent museums - large and small. In my own congressional district we have fantastic institutions such as: the Science Museum, the Goldstein Museum of Design, the Minnesota Children's Museum, the Minnesota Historical Center, the Como Park Zoo and Conservatory, the Walker Art Center, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Minnesota Museum of American Art, the Ramsey House, and the Bell Museum.

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee my work is to set priorities when investing hundreds of billions your tax dollars to keep our country secure, promote the well-being of our citizens, and ensure our nation's interests are protected and advance.

From my point of view, I want Congress and the federal government to be more of a partner in the work you are doing to ensure we have an educated citizenry. Some may criticize the federal government's role in funding the institutions you represent - I think they are wrong. With fiscal challenges in Washington and in states and communities across the country, there are voices that talk about cutting or eliminating museum, arts and humanities funding. They call it a waste of tax dollars or a luxury.

But your institutions and your programming are part of the national interest. America and Minnesota have great museums because our citizens and elected leaders have chosen to invest in you. This has been done through various partnerships between patrons, benefactors, business, and government at the local, state, and federal levels - everyone coming together to build a better future.

In order to for you to continue and sustain the terrific work you are doing - we need to continue the partnership. We have to stand together to protect our community. Please count me as one of your advocates.

Thank you for being here this morning and inviting me to speak.